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Arts & Life

Card lovers and collectors gather at the first local card show event in Denton

Attendees browse sports and Pokemon cards at the Denton Card Show at Texas Inn & Suites-Denton on Aug. 30, 2025.
Photo By Dilip Devanda

By Rebecca Hsu
Staff Writer

For many collectors and dealers, card collecting has been a hobby since childhood. Now, the first-ever Denton Card Show gives attendees a place to come together for their shared interests.

Collectors and owners of local card shop Megan's Sports Cards & Collectibles decided to host a card show that brings together card lovers from the area after seeing a growing collector community in Denton.

"A lot of us really like remembering our childhoods and enjoying that feeling of what we used to whenever we were kids, like opening packs and then getting a really cool card or something [...]," said Kalee Kelly, hobbyist and owner of PokéSprout Collectibles. "And what I'm hoping is ultimately, the next generation of people are going to be interested in it too, because for the same thing, they're getting good memories with families and friends."

Kelly has been collecting Pokémon cards for around 10 years. Kelly's favorite Pokémon is Mimikyu – a creature living in dark places untouched by sunlight.

"If you read the little backstory for Mimikyu, he's one of those misunderstood Pokémon," Kelly said. "And I just always love those that are a little misunderstood and want love, but they don't have it, so I think those are the cutest ones."

Kelly said she thinks the reason Pokémon cards are earning so many fans and collectors is that they bring a sense of nostalgia. About half of the event vendors offered Pokémon cards, while the other half featured sports cards, vintage comic posters, action figures and other collectibles.

A card show is an event where collectors and dealers gather to sell, purchase or trade various types of cards. Card show co-host and sports card collector Billy Young said one reason people are drawn to card collecting is that it is a "money-making hobby" anyone can enjoy, no matter their age.

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Opinion

Editorial: University's lack of advocacy on drag 'pause' compromised students' rights

By the Editorial Board

The university's decision to temporarily "pause" drag on campus was a constitutional infringement of students' First Amendment rights.

The decision, now reversed and allowing drag performances back onto campus grounds, was an egregious failure of the university's inaction to protect the rights of its student body.

Chancellor Michael Williams sent a System-wide directive on March 28 to the presidents of every UNT university campus, telling them to implement a temporary pause on all drag events, both on campus and on any state-funded facilities.

The decision came in response to the Executive Order 14168 titled "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism" from President Donald Trump and a letter from Gov. Greg Abbott to university officials across the state. Both of these orders were blatantly targeted toward enforcing a political ideology of "two sexes" and urging higher educational institutions to reject "woke gender ideologies."

These orders used the thinly veiled excuse of defending women's rights to justify their motivations for wanting the removal of drag events on university campuses. However, there is no logical justification against restricting drag as it is a freedom of identity, and to restrict drag is to take away constitutionally afforded rights from a marginalized community.

Trump's executive order and Abbott's letter prompted Texas universities, including Texas A&M and the University of Texas' educational systems, to put a pause on drag – forbidding the freedom of expression in all but name, with the UNT System following close behind.

The pause on drag performances had immediate effects on the rights of Denton's marginalized communities and their ability to express themselves freely on campus.

Student organizations such as the GLAD Queer Alliance and Sigma Lambda Gammas had to postpone and reschedule their April drag shows, originally to be held on campus. The two student organizations are known to support the queer community through their drag events that encourage students to freely express themselves.

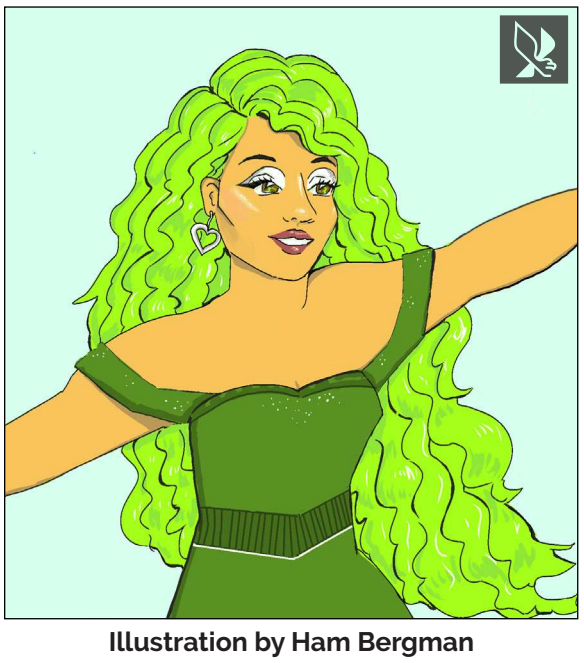

Illustration by Ham Bergman

The drag performance pause is now lifted as of Aug. 27 in response to a letter that was sent by two nonprofit civil liberty organizations. The organizations, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression and the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas, urged the university to rescind its pause.

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News

Denton resident Adam Horwitz filed a lawsuit against Our Daily Bread due to discriminatory conduct.
Photo by Brendan McDonald

Lawsuit filed against Our Daily Bread shelter

By Shehzil Imran
News Editor

Denton filed a plea to the jurisdiction after a petition was filed against the city and its community shelter, Our Daily Bread. The petition alleged that the shelter has a history of negligence, not providing medical or religious accommodations and retaliation.

The petition was submitted by 38-year-old Denton resident Adam Horwitz, who has been staying at the shelter since September 2024.

"I've experienced a pattern of retaliation, dehumanizing treatment, and I've been degraded and humiliated," Horwitz said. "And it's caused me physical injury [...] every aspect of my life has been degraded for the past year. [...]"

In the city's plea, they argued that Our Daily Bread independently maintains and operates itself.

"[...] no City employees work for ODB, took acts on their behalf, or meaningfully interact with those who frequent the shelter," the city's plea filed on Aug. 21, obtained by the North Texas Daily, said. "His intentional tort claims of intentional infliction of emotional distress, conversion, and retaliation do not come within waiver of the City's governmental immunity."

In Horwitz's petition, filed on Aug. 8 and obtained by the *Daily*, he alleged that he developed sciatica in Nov. 2024 due to "dangerously low railings and high rails" from top bunk usage. Sciatica is a condition that causes pain in the sciatic nerve, located in the lower back and running down the leg.

He stated that he had provided the shelter with documentation advising against his being given a top bunk through the shelter's lottery system, which was ignored.

Our Daily Bread changed its model of operation on Sept. 1, removing its emergency shelter housing, which Horwitz was staying in.

Previously, the emergency beds were assigned randomly, and Horwitz alleged that he would often continue to be assigned top bunks after the medical documentation. This would force him to deny a bed assignment, resulting in days to weeks of going without a bed or sleeping on a mat on the floor.

Before Sept. 1, the shelter's total bed count was 176. The shelter's new program has a total of 120 beds, with 12 diversion beds for those who need a temporary place to stay.

"[...] The person who's car I was lucky enough to stay in [in the past] got an apartment," Horowitz said. "I hate imposing on her [...] but I'm grateful, because most of the other people [...] who don't have a bed don't have that luxury."

Horwitz also said that he struggled to receive accommodations for his religious and spiritual beliefs, in which he would ask staff for vegan meals that were already available in the facility. Due to a lack of options, Horwitz would have to travel an hour or two multiple times a week with his belongings to find food that meets his dietary needs.

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Denton releases plea to jurisdiction after resident files lawsuit against Our Daily Bread

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Horwitz's sciatica later developed into a hernia, and he said that he believes it is because of having to travel extensively with the weight of his belongings, despite receiving a letter from his physician on April 10, advising against heavy lifting.

"They said [to me], 'Well then everyone will have a religion or everyone will have high blood pressure," Horwitz said. "[...] I've gone, like, four days [before] drinking just water on the days where I don't have food stamps, because I run out early all the time."

Horwitz said he asked staff if he could leave his belongings in an empty locker during day shelter hours due to his medical issues, but was denied and told conflicting reasons on the matter for the following days.

On May 15, about a month after Horwitz's request, the shelter changed its policies on lockers, which Our Daily Bread Executive Director and Denton resident Wendy McGee said was a result of issues from multiple shelter residents keeping their items in storage for extended periods of time.

"I can't be a storage facility," McGee said. "I don't have the physical capacity and I don't have the staff capacity [...] We were having issues with a couple of things. Basically the privilege of using the lockers was being abused... and that was causing some people not to be able to have access [...]."

Denton resident Adam Horwitz talks about his experiences at Our Daily Bread during the City Council Meeting on April 15, 2025. **Photo by Ismael Beltran**

Horwitz said he felt his needs and accommodations were not being addressed by the shelter management, so he reached out to multiple members of the city, such as City Manager Sara Hensley and Assistant City Manager Jesse Kent.

Chief Communications Officer Dustin Sternback said Texas conducted its own investigation and found no evidence of discrimination or violation of law.

In April, an audit was conducted on Our Daily Bread, finding that the shelter did not meet the requirements of their contract and had unclear and uncoordinated methods for outreach among shelter residents.

One shelter practice the audit found as a violation was the requirement for guests to "check in" at 6 p.m. or lose their designated bed. Admittance at the time was inaccessible from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m., thereby prohibiting late and early entry.

McGee said she believes the audit failed to take into account that the shelter was overcapacity and underfunded.

"We got recliners donated and put those out, over and above what we ever agreed to do for the city," McGee said. "Some of those things where we went over and above, those were completely left out. So, we completely disagree [...] but we're going to keep trying to do our work and trying to help people, and not go back and focus on that opinion piece."

Horwitz said that his main goals from filing the petition are not only to be awarded monetarily for physical injuries, medical expenses, economic losses and mental distress, but also to create a resident forum for people to voice their concerns.

"I want [...] to build a community where people are empowered to fix the issues they're dealing with [and] have support to do that," Horwitz said. "[...] I can tell people [at the shelter] care for each other but it's [currently] not an environment conducive to community. [...]"

Denton Television wins six national awards

By Joe Neuenschwander
Staff Writer

Denton Television received one Award of Honor and four Awards of Distinction from the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors Government Programming Awards on Aug. 21.

"Fire Summer Camp" was given the Award of Excellence for the children and young adults category. DTV won Awards of Distinction in the Arts and Entertainment and Public Safety categories. The channel also won an Award of Honor for the Instruction/Training category.

"I think it's fantastic," said Billy Matthews, DTV manager and Denton resident. "It's fantastic for my team. It's fantastic for the city of Denton."

Matthews said he only expected to win a couple of awards at the NATOA Government Programming Awards.

"When you submit a video for a possible award to me, if you make the finalists part, anything after that is icing on the cake," Matthews said.

DTV gets a lot of its video ideas from other Denton departments and the community as a whole, Matthews said.

"When I hire people, I tell them I want them to enterprise stories," Matthews said. "You know I want them to come to the table with things that interest them and things that they see in their daily life living in this town."

Dustin Sternbeck, Denton's chief communications officer, said over 1,000 United States cities compete for the awards.

"We want to share these stories with our peers across the country," Sternbeck said. "These are our peers voting on what stories are the best."

Getting their work nationally recognized speaks to all the hard work DTV has put in over the past few years, Sternbeck said.

"I think there's a buzz about the city of Denton across the country," Sternbeck said. "I mean, whether it's from our designation as the Halloween capital of Texas to our artistic community, there is just a general buzz about the City of Denton's maturation process over the last couple of years."

Sternbeck said someone from the marketing team came up with an idea to turn the voice from the pedestrian buttons on Denton Town Square into a song featured in "Walk Sign is On." The video shows several people crossing the street at the crosswalks in Denton Square.

"That struck a chord with everybody," Sternbeck said. "[Pedestrians] usually hit the button multiple times and say it themselves."

Kayla Herrod, Denton's deputy director of marketing and communications, said that DTV goes to great lengths to make sure the stories are high quality.

One of the videos Matthews and Denton multimedia journalist Kimberly Barroteran highlighted the most when talking about the work put into these videos was the video titled "Behind the Coffin: Denton's Day of the Dead Festival," which was visual content creator Zach Ashcraft's project. The video tells the story of participants in the Denton coffin race.

"I saw Zach working on that one, and that's one of those videos that takes a lot of time," Barroteran said. "He had to do a lot of behind-the-scenes for that one, and ultimately then having to shoot the Day of the Dead festival to see how it all came together. I thought that one was pretty significant."

"Sycamore Street Bridge Mural" is about Baltimore artist Kirk Seeses painting a mural on the Sycamore Street Bridge. The video outlines the process of hiring the artist for the mural painting and also shares some of his experiences with the community while he was painting the mural.

"When you're talking about the murals and how many we have in Denton and how this community embraced those, when you think about the Day of the Dead festival, and when you think about the 'Walk Sign is On,' and what we did with that video related to social media, uniquely Denton is what comes to mind," Matthews said.

Matthews said the judges noted the uniqueness of the videos at the awards ceremony. He also said the videos show Denton's unique personality.

"I think Denton sets itself apart," Matthews said. We consider ourselves north of ordinary, and I think videos [the three runners up] when we perpetuate that unique story of Denton."

The National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors awarded Denton Television six national awards on Aug. 21, 2025.
Photo by Maria Arellano

Union Circle construction expected to wrap up on time

By Diego Hernandez
Deputy News Editor

Students returning to the university this semester will continue navigating detours around the Union Circle area as the $50 million roadway and utility project moves into its final months.

Denton, working in partnership with the university, began reconstructing the Union Circle in May as part of its 2019 Bond Program. The project, which includes new utilities, a reversed traffic flow and upgrades to bus stops, is expected to keep Union Circle closed until October.

"We understand that the Union Circle garage closing and the Union Circle closing have created some inconvenience, but once it opens up, it should be a much nicer roadway," said Ed Reynolds, university chief of staff and North Central Texas College alumnus. "Traffic should move a lot smoother. It should be a better experience for everybody involved because that Union Circle garage is not just student parking, it's faculty parking, staff parking [and] visitor parking."

Before construction, the majority of the DCTA rides stopped at Union Circle. With the roadway closed, those stops have been moved to Hickory Hall and the Highland Street Garage.

Highland Street itself has been temporarily closed by Denton at the university's request to keep bus traffic on schedule for the fall semester.

"Highland Street is one of our busiest streets in the middle of campus," said Margarita Venegas, university director of communications, in an email to the *North Texas Daily*. "Since those traffic pile-ups can lead to long periods of cars coming down Highland Street, that would impact buses trying to leave Central Avenue, and this would delay bus schedule times — we can't have that happen since students rely on the buses to be on time."

Reynolds said the closure was the result of consultation between the university, Denton and Denton County Transportation Authority.

The Highland Street closure will remain in effect until the end of the semester, after Union Circle reopens in October. Even then, buses will not return to their original stops until January, extending the closure of Highland Street through the end of the fall semester.

"Once complete, Union Circle should not need any major construction for many years," said Kayla Herrod, Denton deputy director of marketing and communications and Texas A&M University alumna, on behalf of Denton's Development Services, in an email to the *Daily*. "Roadways can last twenty years or longer with proper maintenance. Underground utilities can last up to fifty years and beyond."

Reynolds said no construction is planned for Highland Street. Instead, the additional time will allow crews to finish work at Union Circle before buses are rerouted back.

Reynolds said the university is implementing new shelters, Americans with Disabilities accessible bus pads and updated facilities for riders.

The project will change how drivers access the Union Circle Garage. Entrances and exits are being reconfigured so vehicles can turn directly into the garage without looping around the circle.

"If you've ever driven through Union Circle during the spring or fall semester, you know it can get really congested," Reynolds said. "So by doing that, we'll at least cut down the number of cars that have to go all the way around the circle in front of the Union to come back around."

The city approved the university's request to reverse the traffic flow on Union Circle, which Reynolds said was a safety measure for students getting off buses.

According to the 2019 Bond Program page on the Discuss Denton site, construction will continue into 2026 with several roadway and utility projects scheduled.

Beginning January 2026, crews are set to replace utilities on Bernard Street between Hickory and Chestnut, followed by a complete roadway rebuild on the same stretch lasting through June.

Utility improvements on Avenue A, from Eagle to Maple, are expected to run from late February to early April, with additional work at the Avenue A and Maple intersection continuing into July.

These projects are part of the broader Neighborhood 6 bond package, which includes Union Circle and the surrounding streets. Herrod said the construction for the Union Circle is "still anticipated to be completed in October."

However, the larger program will keep construction active in the area through mid-2026 as Denton replaces aging infrastructure and reconfigures high-traffic corridors around campus.

"We're really anxious to get [the Union Circle] back open and make it a much better experience when you come to UNT," Reynolds said.

The City of Denton temporarily closed Highland Street in order to keep bus traffic on schedule for the fall semester. **Photo by Ismael Beltran**

NEWS AROUND TEXAS

By Shehzil Imran & Diego Hernandez
News Editor/Deputy News Editor

Over 800 bills went into effect on Sept. 1 after being passed in the 89th Legislative Session and special session. Here are a few new major laws:

Senate Bill 835 bans non-disclosure agreements in cases of sexual assault

Senate Bill 835 will ban and nullify NDAs for sexual assault and human trafficking. The bill is also known as "Trey's Law," named after child sexual abuse victim Trey Carlock, who was abused as a child by a camp counselor and signed an NDA. Carlock died by suicide in 2019. The bill initially was meant to ban NDAs in the case of only child sexual abuse, before being expanded. Current NDAs will also become void and victims will be released, unless a court says otherwise.

House Bill 46 broadens access to medical marijuana program

The state's newest changes to its medical marijuana program make those with traumatic brain injury, chronic pain, terminal illness and Crohn's disease eligible to be prescribed items such as cannabis patches, approved inhalers, vapers and nebulizers up to one percent total THC. Prescriptions will be certified for one year, allowing up to four 90-day refills of cannabis supply, monitored by the Texas Medical Board. HB46 and the medical marijuana program are not affected by Senate Bill 2024, which is a general, broad penalization of the sale of THC-containing products.

Senate Bill 12 extends ban on diversity, equity and inclusion policies to K–12 schools

The newly passed law will ban K-12 school systems from acknowledging individual aspects such as race, sexuality, ethnicity and gender identity in hiring decisions. Schools will also be prohibited from providing guidance, programs, instructions and support focused on sexual orientation and gender identity. This includes sponsoring and hosting sexual orientation and gender identity clubs. The American Civil Liberties Union of Texas filed a lawsuit in federal court on Aug. 28 alongside Transgender Law Center and Baker McKenzie, challenging the bill in an effort to block it.

House Bill 229 defines gender based on biological reproduction systems

Defined as the "women's bill of rights" by the law's backers, the bill requires companies to define sex strictly on biological terms. The bill directs state records, policies and programs to align with birth-assigned sex, not gender identity. Law backers argue that the law is created and needed to protect women's rights, as well as provide clarity in unclear gender-challenged areas such as sports and prisons. Critics, however, argue that it marginalizes transgender and nonbinary Texans, erasing their identities from state records.

First-ever Denton Card Show features Pokémon cards, sports cards and other collectibles

A vendor speaks to attendees about Pokemon cards at the Denton Card Show at Texas Inn & Suites-Denton on Aug. 30, 2025. **Photo By Dilip Devanda**

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"My [five-year-old] son just sold three cards — somebody gave him three junk cards, [and he] sold it for $12," Young said. "It's buy and sell and trade. Everybody can make money."

However, financial gain is not the only reason people love collectible cards. Megan Sartain, host of the event and the owner of Megan's Sports Cards & Collectibles, said some people are looking for players or characters they love.

"Like my nieces today, they were going around getting all the dollar Travis Kelce because they like Travis Kelce," Sartain said. "I'm the same way. I want every Michael Jordan. There is from 10-cent Michael Jordan to million-dollar Michael Jordan. They like cards you like to collect, regardless of the value of it."

Addie Leveridge, a university senior geography major and collector, said she remembers watching the Pokémon series as a child and started collecting cards. She would spend hours having fun playing on the bedroom floor with her brother.

"I think that was like one of the first things we connected on, because we were too young to play Minecraft together or whatever at that age," Leveridge said. "So yeah, we spent a lot of hours doing t hat together."

While many people see card collecting as a pastime they simply enjoy or a profitable hobby, some treat it more like a business. Mark Watterson, vendor and sports card collector, is one of them.

Watterson said he started collecting sports cards as a child and later began selling his childhood collections when he found out the cards were gaining value in the 1980s. He started selling again about two years ago, after he learned that card shows were getting popular again.

Watterson said people who are into sports cards are usually those who watch and follow sports. These fans often want to buy the cards of their favorite players. Watterson added that the most popular player cards are rookie cards, which are a player's first cards when they debut in a league.

"We're out there looking for the rookie cards of this player or that player, and as years go by, it's more difficult to find that rookie card," Watterson said. "We like the rookie card because that's the youngest face you'll see on that player's card.

Watterson said running a card collection as a business is not as easy as people might think. Collectors may purchase a pack of cards, only to find it challenging to sell them again. Watterson, who has a full-time job outside of selling cards, said he still runs the card business because it is difficult and fun.

Sartain said the Aug. 30 show received a good response from the community, with over 600 people visiting the event, and over 70 vendors tending to the crowds. Sartain added that the team plans to host it again in the future.

"Everybody seemed to enjoy it and all thanked us for doing it," Sartain said. "Everybody was happy we were able to put it together."

Things To Do:

First Friday Art Making

When: Friday, Sept. 5, 8 p.m.
Where: Bramblitt's Yellow Dog Art Bar & Gallery, 219 E Hickory St.
What: Make something this Friday with Bramblitt's Yellow Dog Art Bar. The Art Bar is promising to have a live model for casual gesture sketching and drop-in art making—including a fun Paint with Wax activity. All skill levels are welcome, all materials provided. They say to come as you are and leave with art. Guests are also invited to grab a drink while creating. Admission is free.

The Final Appearance of BULLETSBETWEENTONGUES & Losing Today with support from A Brief Memoir

When: Sunday, Sept. 7, 7 p.m.
Where: Rubber Gloves Rehearsal Studio, 411 E. Sycamore St.
What: The Final Appearance of BULLETSBETWEENTONGUES & Losing Today with support from A Brief Memoir. Bulletsbetweentounges is a popular Dallas-Fort Worth area band that has been a staple of local performances. Their final show, along with Losing Today, is this Sunday on the Rubber GLoves Rehearsal Studios patio. Do not miss this final opportunity as tickets are $10, and one must be 18 years or accompanied by a guardian.

Dog Days of Denton

When: Saturday, Sept. 6, 9 a.m.
Where: Quakertown Park, 700 Oakland St.
What: The Denton Parks Foundation and over 7,000 dog lovers will be barking in the park this September 6, 2025, for the 31st Annual Dog Days of Denton. Join them for a tail-wagging, free and fun event at Quakertown Park. Plus, visit vendors, learn a thing or two from experts in the field, participate in canine contests, and enjoy food and brews, all benefiting the North Lakes Dog Park.

Giuseppe's Italian Restaurant closes after 30 years of service with plans to start a new chapter in building's life

By Sophia Carbajal
Senior Arts & Life Writer

Born in Italy, 58-year-old Giuseppe Brownell founded Giuseppe's Italian Restaurant in 1996 out of love for food and serving others. After almost three decades of serving the Denton community, they closed their doors on Aug. 29.

Located at 821 N Locust St, the restored Victorian home-turned-restaurant is full of history. The antique furniture paired with the cuisine made Giuseppe's Italian Restaurant stand out among other dining options.

"This past week really showed us the support we've had over the years," Brownell said. "We had one of the busiest weeks we've ever had, and everybody came to say goodbye and see what the next chapter is, so it was really overwhelming. I hoped everybody had the experience they deserved."

Brownell had been working in the Dallas food industry for four years before starting the restaurant. Brownell said he sought to be an inviting host to members of the Denton community.

"I think for me, I loved the social aspect of watching people come in and entertaining them," Brownell said. "That's how they spend their time and hard-earned money, and that gave me a lot of joy to see that happen."

Giuseppe's Italian Restaurant was bought by Terra Star LLC, who plan to rebrand the store by integrating more modern appliances. The new restaurant, Den10 Restaurant Bar, will feature a more diverse menu.

The owners and Brownell will make changes to the restaurant gradually over time, starting with a revamp of the kitchen, then building a new bar and reconstructing the front and back patio spaces.

The new restaurant does not have a set opening date yet, but Brownell said they plan to open Den10 Restaurant Bar after the first round of renovations, which could take a few weeks. Brownell and the new owners plan to rehire staff members who wish to continue working at the restaurant following the rebrand.

Staff member Piper Welch, 25, has been a waitress at Giuseppe's Italian Restaurant since 2022 and plans to stay on the staff when the restaurant reopens.

Welch said she loved working at the restaurant because some of the regular customers would come in specifically when she was on shift. Welch loved the friendly atmosphere of the restaurant and sees Brownell as family.

"This is by far my favorite," Welch said. "He took me in basically like a daughter to him. He's very helpful outside of work."

Welch said she relied on Brownell for support over the years and once called him for help when her car broke down. It is connections like these that Brownell said he enjoys most.

"You want to provide that kind of environment where people want to come in, and if you're able to do that, you're going to be successful," Brownell said. "That's the biggest part of what we created, our staff had to do something right to make this place last that long."

For almost 30 years, Giuseppe's Italian Restaurant made a significant impact on hundreds of Denton community members. Denton resident Shelia Brazeal Bowles, 53, has been a customer of Giuseppe's Italian Restaurant since it opened. Shelia Brazeal Bowles' husband, 53-year-old Steven Bowles, is the co-owner of Mulkey-Bowles-Montgomery Funeral Home, which is located just down the street from the restaurant.

Brazeal Bowles said she and her husband would often walk over to the restaurant from the funeral home before it quickly became one of Brazeal Bowles' favorite spots.

"We all felt like we were treated as if we were family there, not just customers," Brazeal Bowles said. "The staff was always so friendly. We will miss the restaurant and the wonderful food, but at least we have the special memories to cherish for a lifetime."

Brazeal Bowles' family and friends threw her a surprise party at Giuseppe's Italian Restaurant for her 50th birthday. She described it as one of her top memories. The staff set up a long table in the banquet room at the back of the restaurant for her whole family to enjoy.

Although she has enjoyed the intimate feel of the restaurant, Brazeal Bowles said she is not worried about the new changes to come.

"I feel G has served our community well for 30 years and I trust his instincts and his plans for this new business," Brazeal Bowles said. "I know he is well-loved and the folks here will continue to support him."

Brownell said he is sad that the restaurant closed, but is excited to start something new. Though Brownell is taking a step back from his role as owner, he sees himself continuing to serve the community for years to come.

"You obviously can't walk away from 30 years and say 'Wow, this is the best thing that ever happened to me,' nor can you walk into the next chapter and say 'Well, that's the next big thing,' because you just don't know what tomorrow brings," Brownell said. "It's an emotional moment, and it's one you take day by day."

Restaurant owner Giuseppe Brownell poses with his employees outside Giuseppe's Italian Restaurant during its closing day on Aug. 29, 2025.
Photo by Katie Brackens

Sabrina Carpenter proves why she is 'Man's Best Friend' in seventh studio album

By Gianna Ortner-Findlay
Editor-in-Chief

Nearly a year to the date from Sabrina Carpenter's last show-stopping album "Short n' Sweet," the pop singer surprised fans with the announcement of her seventh studio album, "Man's Best Friend," on Instagram and other platforms on June 11.

Fans had to wait two and a half months for the Aug. 29 release, with the album's only proper single, "Manchild," dropping on June 5, nearly a week before the album's announcement.

The two other singles released earlier this year on Feb. 13, "15 Minutes" and "Busy Woman," left fans hopeful for new music. Both songs were included as bonus tracks to the deluxe version of "Short n' Sweet," although they would have been stronger additions to "Man's Best Friend."

With the singer currently touring, Carpenter releasing new music, especially a whole album, was not expected. "Man's Best Friend" boasts a mostly thematically tied and expertly produced set of songs throughout its 38 minutes and 24 seconds, with only two notable exceptions.

Each of Carpenter's tracks has a uniquely theatrical element to it, reminiscent of the singer's start in acting. The songs, similar to her last album, all exude a sense of reclaimed feminine energy, lacing energetic songs with introspective lyrics as well as some that are just plain fun.

Carpenter opens the album with "Manchild," yet another power ballad for emotionally mature women who date emotionally immature men. The song starts with an '80s-inspired synth, which later gives way to a banjo and melody-laden chorus as Carpenter laments her relationship.

Illustration by **Victoria Maldonado**

While the song's seemingly nonsensical lyrics, combined with its genre-bending style, may put off some listeners, if fans persist, they will be rewarded with Carpenter's cleverly layered lyricism, which rears its head in the first track.

Ironically, the second track, "Tears," while being one of three songs on the 12-song album that does not have an explicit tag attached, is playful and slightly sexually explicit as Carpenter announces what gets her aroused. The song is a play on all the things the guy at its heart is doing to make her feel pleasure.

"My Man on Willpower" is a return to the upbeat refrains and the occasional tambourines peppered underneath, with Carpenter singing that "He used to be literally obsessed with me/I'm suddenly the least sought-after girl in the land." The song is the opposite of Carpenter's "Espresso," as a man who was once obsessed with her loses interest.

"Sugar Talking" takes a slower approach and is another lamentation about a man whose words do not match his actions. With lyrics like, "Put your loving where your mouth is/Your sugar talking isn't working tonight oh-oh," Carpenter shares a common experience: being fed up with inaction.

There is a lack of an overpowering backing track, allowing Carpenter to explore her lower range, which has not been done as effectively since "emails i can't send" in 2022. While Carpenter's falsetto and high notes are enviable, there are moments in "Short n' Sweet" where listeners can hear Carpenter skating the top of her range.

Although the blown-out speaker effect of the reverbed guitar, combined with the dreamy strings and harmonies, is redeeming, "We Almost Broke Up Again Last Night" is entertaining but lacks lasting impact.

The breathy start, while a staple in several moments of her tracks, feels unnecessary in this song. With almost no substance between the first and second chorus, the song reiterates points that are more effectively explored in other tracks, leaving listeners to sing the lyrics "Big deal, we've been here before and we'll be here tomorrow" about the song.

"Nobody's Son" is a return to Carpenter's comfortable mixed belt and lower register, combined with her signature story-based prose. It is also a return to the '80s-inspired drum beats and synthesizer, with strategically layered harmonies throughout.

The eighth track, "Never Getting Laid," is "We Almost Broke Up Again Last Night's" opposite, succeeding in creating a slow and dreamy relational complaint, with Carpenter effortlessly weaving between her registers.

"When Did You Get Hot," "Go Go Juice" and "House Tour" all have a slight twang and utilize the same upbeat upper layers characterized by most of the album, with "Go Go Juice" and "House Tour" using deliciously placed metaphors.

"Don't Worry I'll Make You Worry" is a dreamy "sad-girl" ballad that shows the dark side of Carpenter's attachment style. Similar to "We Almost Broke Up Again Last Night," the song features beautifully executed higher register harmonies that are overshadowed by the lyrical content that feels opposite to the work done throughout the album.

The last track of the album, "Goodbye," is a perfect ender, culminating with theatrical and ABBA-esque trills and strings. It is a song devoted to saying goodbye in different languages, combining every female empowerment album Carpenter has ever written into one.

"Man's Best Friend" is the fruition of years of Carpenter exploring and expanding her sound, with the singer unafraid to create music that sounds good to her and her listeners, not what is popular in the industry.

Gianna's rating: 4/5

Icon of the Week:

Laufey

Credit **Foundations Management**

Laufey Lín Bing Jónsdóttir, known by just Laufey, is the *North Texas Daily*'s icon of the week for her recent release of 2025's "A Matter of Time."

The-26-year-old Grammy award-winning artist rose to prominence in 2020 for her genre-bending fusion of jazz and pop. Born in Reykjavíc, Iceland to a classical violinist mother, she grew up playing the piano and cello which she mastered before she turned nine. At the age of 15, Laufey performed as a solo-celloist for the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and the same year auditioned for Iceland's version of "America's Got Talent," where she ended as a finalist.

In April of 2020, her debut single charted at number one on Icelandic Radio, since she has been signed to the Warner Chappell Music label and gone on three worldwide tours. Her second studio album, 2024's "Bewitched," won best traditional pop vocal album at the 2024 Grammy Awards.

She has also been named one of *Time* Magazine's "Woman of the Year" for 2025, and Morgan Enos, a writer at Grammys.com, wrote that Bewitched's success shows Laufey has left "jazz neophytes spellbound."

Laufey charms in 'A Matter of Time,' showcases artist at her best

By Riley Morgan
Staff Writer

Following the breakout success of her 2023 album, "Bewitched," Icelandic jazz-pop singer Laufey has released her third studio album, "A Matter of Time." The project has a runtime of 45 minutes and features 14 tracks with production from longtime collaborator Spencer Stewart and The National's Aaron Dessner.

The album received over 12 million streams on Spotify on its opening day, with all 14 tracks appearing on Spotify's Daily Top Songs USA chart. The project also propelled Laufey to a career peak of No. 32 on Spotify's Daily Top Artists Global chart.

The album opens with "Clockwork," a lovely track that perfectly meshes Laufey's unique vocals with Stewart's classic production. The song also features a beautiful piano accompaniment courtesy of Ted Case, along with Laufey's twin sister, Junia Lin Jónsdóttir, on violin.

The next track is "Lover Girl," which was released before the album on June 25. The song's fun lyrics, combined with its bossa nova-inspired production, make it one of the most catchy on the album, allowing it a high replay value.

"Snow White" is another previously released track that came out on Aug. 7. A downtempo ballad about Laufey's insecurities, the song has a slow start, but builds up to a powerful final chorus with some of Laufey's best vocals on the album.

A standout on the album, "Castle in Hollywood," is the first track of the project to feature production from Dessner. The song's acoustic guitars and pop structure set it apart from the rest of the project while still managing to feel cohesive with the overall mood of the album.

"Carousel" is a dreamy waltz, and while it is not the album's best, it does not overstay its welcome either. The track does, however, flow nicely into the album's lead single, "Silver Lining," which was released on April 3. "Silver Lining" breaks away from Laufey's jazz roots with a much more indie-rock sound, including an outstanding vocal performance from Laufey during the chorus.

While lyrically amazing, "Too Little, Too Late" leaves something to be desired production-wise. It feels like the track is really building up to something during both choruses, but unfortunately, neither time pays off.

"Cuckoo Ballet - Interlude" is an instrumental orchestral track that interpolates multiple songs from across the album and playfully jumps between each one. The music acts as a prelude to "Forget-Me-Not," which features the Iceland Symphony Orchestra.

One of just a few completely self-written tracks on the project, "Forget-Me-Not" is easily the most ambitious song on the album. The song has haunting production and awe-inspiring vocals, including Laufey singing in Icelandic.

Released on May 15, "Tough Luck" starts as another bossa nova-infused track before transitioning into a song reminiscent of Olivia Rodrigo or Chappell Roan. Despite these two distinct styles, the song is a standout and does not sound cobbled together.

Also produced by Dessner is "A Cautionary Tale," the project's longest track. While other Dessner-produced tracks on the album mix his style with Laufey's, this one sounds noticeably closer to some of his work with other artists, but this does not detract from the song.

"Mr. Eclectic" is one of the most unique tracks on the album, and features background vocals from pop artist Clairo. The song sounds like it is made to be played in an intimate jazz lounge with warm production from Stewart and playful vocals and lyrics from Laufey.

The penultimate track, "Clean Air," is something entirely new for Laufey, sounding much more country-influenced than anything that she has ever released. While not the shortest song on the album, the track does sound like it ends prematurely and would benefit from a bridge or an extended outro.

"Sabotage" is the final track of the project and works perfectly as the album's outro. While Laufey's singing and lyrics are great as usual, the song's real standout is the instrumental final minute of the song, with some of Stewart's best production work. The track is as haunting as it is beautiful, and ends the album in a completely different place than it started.

Laufey tried a lot of new sounds on "A Matter of Time," and for the most part, she sticks the landing every time. Released on Aug. 22, the album continues Laufey's upward trajectory and leaves her with a multitude of sounds to continue growing upon with her next project.

Riley's rating: 4.5/5

Illustration by **Vianne Ciuro**

Newest North Texas volleyball coach Dave Fleming builds program through relationships

By Justin Na
Sports Editor

To the right of North Texas' volleyball gym are the doors to the team's newly renovated facility and the office of first-year head coach Dave Fleming. He took over the Mean Green program in late December after spending the past 20 years at Division II Colorado Mesa University, a time frame older than some of his current players.

Despite being tasked with plenty on a to-do list as a new coach, Fleming's favorite memory this past spring had nothing to do with volleyball.

Instead, he was sitting in his office, accompanied by a couple of players. He said they did not talk an ounce about the sport and instead they spoke "about absolutely nothing and absolutely everything."

The seemingly ordinary memory represents a foundational open-door policy Fleming wanted to establish when he first arrived in Denton.

So far in his head coaching career, his approach has seemingly translated with a 390-184 record in the past 20 years with Colorado Mesa.

Including his time as an assistant, he has coached for 30 years across the DIII, DII, DI and Olympic level with Team USA. At the core of his program philosophies – regardless of location, record or roster – have been relationships.

North Texas Volleyball head coach Dave Fleming gives the team tactics during a timeout on Aug. 24, 2025. **Photo by Ismael Beltran**

"I really try to sell that my door is open. That I'm not a transactional coach," Fleming said. "That I'm really about them in a holistic manner. It's about them becoming a better student, about them becoming a better athlete and about them becoming a better person."

Maintaining an open office was just one way to foster relationships at North Texas. As Fleming met with the Mean Green players this past offseason, he also sought their input on what they needed from the program.

Sophomore Ryann Vik said the team has been receptive to the start of Fleming's new tenure. She said his focus on culture-building was a good match for the Mean Green's most significant needs.

"He's coming to a team that was maybe not glued together, maybe not gelled and he's really trying to bring our culture together and bring us together as girls and as a program," Vik said.

North Texas went 10-18 and exited the first round of the American Conference playoffs last season after losing 2-1 to No. 2 seed Rice. The program then decided to part with former head coach, Kristee Porter, and contacted Fleming as one of its candidates.

Fleming had spent two decades as a DII coach and knew a DI team reaching out to him was a rare occurrence. From there, the interview gave Fleming enough insight, and he felt the program had a strong foundation to build upon.

"I really didn't want to make the jump to DI unless I could be successful [...]," Fleming said. "And I get it, we're probably not going to compete with [the University of] Texas, but I think we have a real opportunity to be in the discussion for an American Conference championship year in and year out."

This story was shortened for print. Read more at ntdaily.com.

Athlete of the Week:

Ethan Wesloski

Credit **Mean Green Sports**

In a 51-0 North Texas football win over Lamar, junior linebacker Ethan Wesloski forced and recovered a fumble to score a touchdown on the defensive side of the ball. The score occurred in the final seconds of the second quarter when Wesloski recorded a strip-sack on the Cardinals' senior quarterback Robert Coleman. After forcing the fumble by Coleman, Wesloski tracked and recovered the ball in the end zone for a touchdown. His recovery gave North Texas a 37-0 lead heading into halftime. Wesloski also finished the game with a team-leading seven tackles and two tackles for loss helping the Mean Green shut out their opponent.

North Texas men's golf fueled by new and familiar talent heading into upcoming season

By Rolando Medina
Staff Writer

The North Texas men's golf team entered last season's American Conference Championship tournament with its eyes set on an NCAA Regional appearance.

The team placed third following a program-best conference round with a score of 277 on the final day of the tournament. Despite not advancing, the result was two places higher than last year's fifth-place finish.

North Texas' national rank fell eight spots after head coach Luke Calcatera's second season, according to NCAA rankings. He said the team is focusing on consistency and growing confidence heading into his third year in the position.

"What we're capable of doing, we don't want to put just one goal on that," Calcatera said. "It's mainly just focusing on how we can get better, not giving ourselves a label and then just letting ourselves go out there and play."

The 2025-2026 roster, which Calcatera said will focus on development, includes both familiar and new faces hoping to add to the trophy collection in the team's Bruzzy's golf facility.

Returning players for the Mean Green include sophomore golfers Alex Huang and Blake Keen, who led last year's team in average and best round, respectively.

Junior golfer Joe Stover lines up his putt at the Bruzzy's UNT Golf Practice Facility on Aug. 27, 2025. **Photo by Taylor Pleasant**

Huang and Keen were both part of Calcatera's first freshman recruiting class at North Texas and contributed early as true freshmen. Now they head into their second year with another season of development under their belts.

"There's a lot of things that they saw for the first time last year," Calcatera said. "Now, you're going back through it more prepared and have seen it before, so we've got a lot more experience."

Keen, who earned all-conference honors his freshman year, spent the offseason recovering from a back injury and said he feels ready to contribute in year two.

"I had to take a couple months off for my back," Keen said. "I started to get healthy about four weeks ago or so, just prepping for the season and getting ready."

Huang, meanwhile, spent his offseason participating in competitive play, with Calcatera saying the results have already started to show.

The Mean Green fields their five best players every tournament based on results from qualifying rounds played among teammates. Calcatera said Huang has been a standout player so far, performing early in the qualifiers.

"Alex has played a lot of tournaments over the summer and played really well in some elite amateur events," Calcatera said. "When we started qualifying, he won our first qualifier and played really well."

This year's opening tournament takes place on Sept. 7 at the Argent Financial Classic hosted by Louisiana Tech University, with qualifying rounds deciding the team's opening lineup.

"You have to be ready every day to go and compete because we have so many qualifying rounds we're playing to see who we're going to take to Louisiana," Calcatera said.

Incoming golfers include freshmen Mitchell Maier and Rayhan Latief, as well as two senior transfers from the University of Central Arkansas, Noah Blaickner and Kalle Svederman.

Senior Alvaro Roldos and juniors Rafael Estrada and Joe Stover will also return to the 2025-26 roster. Estrada and Stover were both part of the traveling squad that secured a top-five finish at the American Conference Championship this past spring.

The bolstered roster has already made an impression on Keen, who is eager to continue competing for qualifying spots alongside his teammates.

"Qualifying has been tight," said Keen. "The team is really good this year, and competing with these guys is awesome."

Calcatera believes the collective talent of the group will provide opportunities for players to rise to the occasion.

"It's a lot more competitive the whole way through the lineup this year, so [we are] excited to see who steps up and takes that spot," said Calcatera. "It's difficult to be one of those five, and there's a lot of depth in that area."

Blaickner is another tournament spot competitor who enters his last season of collegiate golf after arriving over the offseason.

He said the program's team construction, facilities and coaching matched his ambitions coming from Central Arkansas. While this year's NCAA Regional starts May 18, Blaickner believes this roster's talent and experience could propel them even further.

"I think this year we have a good chance to make nationals and at least get a run for it," said Blaickner. "I think we're going to be dangerous."

Junior distance runner Ximena Lopez de Escalera looks to bounce back after injury-shortened sophomore season

By Luc Muir
Staff Writer

Under the beaming Wichita, Kansas, sun in only her fourth meet with the Mean Green, then-sophomore distance runner Ximena Lopez de Escalera stood awaiting the highest-stakes event of her collegiate career: the American Conference Championship.

Her heart raced as she crossed the red and blue finish line. She finished in 12th place, behind her former teammate and now-graduate distance runner Betty Bajika, who finished in seventh.

"We have a really difficult conference, so that was an incredible moment," Lopez de Escalera said. "That was something I had always dreamed of. I didn't know I was capable of performing at that level."

Lopez de Escalera and Bajika later received the first all-conference honors for North Texas women's cross country since 2020. Lopez de Escalera's 12th-place finish also helped the team reach fifth place, the highest conference finish for the program since 2017.

Her individual success did not stop there. Lopez de Escalera also ran the second-fastest women's 6K in program history with a time of 20 minutes and 16.7 seconds. Her quick start with the team came after spending one season at the University of Memphis before transferring.

Credit Mean Green Sports

In her time there, she said she learned the program was not the best fit for her. Now at North Texas, she said this program has enabled her to reach new heights.

"I learned a lot of things, things that I wanted in a program," Lopez de Escalera said. "Now here I've grown really close with everyone, and we're really tight-knit. It's kind of like we're a family."

Lopez de Escalera, now a junior, said a huge difference behind her supportive environment is the cross country head coach Erik Stevens, who she said puts an emphasis on each member of the team.

"I love how coach sees every single person as an individual," Lopez de Escalera said. "All our bodies handle different things, and we all have different backgrounds. He really puts in all the time and dedication, which makes him a good coach."

Another impactful change has been her teammates. In addition to what she described as "family-like" relationships, Lopez de Escalera and some teammates would write Bible verses on their arms before running – a tradition that helps her compete.

"Having that reminder there with me during the races is special," Lopez de Escalera said.

Her religious faith has recently been a point of focus as she has recovered from a foot injury this past offseason. After breaking her foot the week after the American Conference tournament in November, she had to sit out the rest of this past year's track and field season.

"It was really hard during the spring watching everyone else being able to run and perform and compete when I couldn't," Lopez de Escalera said. "I stayed faithful, relying on God and his plan for me. I had to remind myself that everything happens for a reason."

Lopez de Escalera had surgery in March and started running again in May. She said the faith and trust instilled by the program allowed her to stay positive throughout her recovery.

"It helped remind me of my love for the sport and to be grateful every day that I can run and be here competing," Lopez de Escalera said.

Her teammate, junior distance runner Aditi Silwal, said Lopez de Escalera's return is impactful to the team as someone who has seen her compete firsthand.

"She just comes to dominate, and she's not egotistical about it," Silwal said. "It's probably one of the most inspiring and motivational things that our team has seen."

Their friendship has blossomed outside of the sport, with Lopez de Escalera moving in with Silwal and two other teammates.

"She's the person I go to if I ever need to talk to anyone, because she's literally across the hall," Silwal said. "It's an amazing experience. They're kind of past my teammates at this point."

Lopez de Escalera's swift development as a runner has been noticeably unique, as she has only been competitively running since her sophomore year of high school.

She was previously a swimmer for most of her life, discovering the world of track almost by accident when she missed a swim tryout at her high school and instead tried out for cross country.

"I think the fact that I got into running by fate reminds me that I'm doing this because I love it," Lopez de Escalera said.

She joins junior and senior distance runners Trinity Trotter and London Culbreath as the first cross country captains in Stevens' three-year tenure, and one of three captains on the women's side this year.

"They're three ladies that show up every day, put in the work and are not afraid to call people out if they need to," Stevens said. "They're vocal when it matters, but they also lead by example, which is exactly what this group needs."

Building off the success she found in her limited time last year, Lopez de Escalera said she feels excited about her potential for this season.

"Not being able to finish the season last year really left me wanting more," Lopez de Escalera said. "I hit times during cross country that I didn't know were possible. I want to build on that and hopefully break some school records along the way."

At a Glance:

Soccer

North Texas soccer (3-3) returns back home on Sept. 4 to play against Abilene Christian (3-3) in their final home match until Sept. 18 against the University of Texas at San Antonio (2-2-2). Abilene Christian has lost two games in a row before heading to Denton, having last lost 1-0 to East Texas A&M (3-2) on Aug. 31. North Texas is also returning from a 1-0 loss but to No. 20 Oklahoma (6-0). The game will start at 7 p.m. and will also be streamable on ESPN+.

Football

The Mean Green football team (1-0) will play its first road game at 2:30 p.m. on Sept. 6 against Western Michigan (0-1) after a 51-0 season opener win against Lamar (0-1). Last week, North Texas recorded 462 yards to the Cardinals' 119. Offensively, redshirt-freshman quarterback Drew Mestemaker threw for 329 yards and three touchdowns. While defensively, the unit recorded its first shut out in the past 22 seasons. Western Michigan is coming off a 23-6 loss to Michigan State (1-0) on Aug. 29.

Volleyball

North Texas volleyball (3-0) continues their non-conference schedule in the 305 challenge beginning against Drake (1-2) at 12 p.m. on Sept. 5. The team will also play against RV Miami (1-1) later at 5 p.m. on the same day before finishing the three away game streak against Stetson (1-2) on Sept. 6 at 10 a.m. After these three games, the team will return to Denton on Sept. 12 to play their first home game against Little Rock (2-1) at 7 p.m.

COLUMN: Consistent winning without championships is an undervalued measure of success in sports

By Ruben Plascencia
Staff Writer

Following North Texas women's soccer's 2-1 loss against Incarnate Word on Aug. 14, fans on X started mulling over firing longtime head coach John Hedlund.

In a post on X, one fan praised Hedlund's career commitment to the program but argued he "has taken the program as far as he can." The fan mentioned Hedlund's 0-7 record in NCAA Tournament appearances and declining success against Big 12 opponents.

At the time of writing, the Mean Green are 3-3, and talk of firing Hedlund has died down. However, the idea, albeit exaggerated, brings up a recurring sports dilemma about how a program's consistent success can seem meaningless if the team appears to stop improving and plateau.

When a coaching change is necessary, it often becomes apparent through increased losses, fan and media backlash or an internal team culture issue. Until these signs appear, teams and fans should be more patient with a consistently winning but not advancing team because a future under new leadership is always more uncertain.

The team posted a graphic to X on June 16 highlighting Hedlund's 30 consecutive winning seasons, a feat three other Division I women's soccer head coaches – Anson Dorrance, Steve Swanson and John Daly – have accomplished. Hedlund and Dorrance are the only head coaches who have achieved the milestone with one program without any losing seasons.

Daly's career is the most similar to Hedlund's. From 1987 to 2017, he led William & Mary to 413 wins in 31 seasons, including 22 NCAA Tournament appearances and a .683 winning percentage. By the end of the 2024 season, Hedlund scored 400 wins in 30 seasons with seven NCAA Tournament appearances and a .698 win percentage.

Daly retired after his first losing season (8-10-2) in 2017. Since then, the Tribe has had one winning season in seven years and has not returned to the NCAA Tournament. Even with Daly's involvement in the next hire, with as head coach Julie Shackford played for Daly from 1984 to 1987, a coaching change may not guarantee success.

Replacing a head coach means replacing a team's leading strategist and, at times, one of its best recruiters. Across college sports, this can mean an exodus of players transferring out and recruits decommitting to a program. Unless the team is already a nationally recognizable brand, retooling often leads to regression.

James Madison football is a recent example of this trend. In 2024, former head coach Curt Cignetti left for Indiana. Meanwhile, 13 players and six coaches followed suit.

Cignetti's Dukes made three semifinals and one championship game in the Football Championship Subdivision from 2019 to 2021. After joining the Football Bowl Subdivision, JMU ranked as high as No. 18 in The Associated Press poll and would have competed for two conference championships. An NCAA transition rule requiring new FBS teams to sit out of postseason games for two years barred the team from both conference championship games.

In 2024, after Cignetti's departure, JMU finished 9-4 and missed the Sun Belt Conference title game. The team achieved its first bowl win but still regressed slightly from its 11-2 record the year before.

North Texas recently faced a similar situation when it fired football head coach Seth Littrell after the 2022 season. His 44-44 record falls short of Hedlund's nearly .700 win percentage with women's soccer, but Littrell's seven seasons account for six of the 15 bowl game appearances in program history.

It is too early to tell how current head coach Eric Morris' tenure will differ from Littrell's. Through the 2024 season, Morris is 11-14 and coached last season's team in a 30-28 loss to Texas State in the SERVPRO First Responder Bowl. Winning a bowl game or an American Conference title is the next step he needs to "raise the bar" that Littrell had set.

Outside pressure, like criticism from fans or negative press, can also make a team's situation feel worse than it is. Outsiders see a specific result and want it replicated or built upon. North Texas does not have a "hardcore" fan base, but like any university, its following of alumni, athletic department donors and locals want the best from its teams.

Winning is already a challenging goal, getting tougher in modern college sports. Rosters change yearly through transfers and graduates. Strong seasons can work against a team if they result in players leaving for bigger programs or brand opportunities.

Hedlund should run no risk of being fired unless the team faces a significant decline. In that case, his tenure likely ends in retirement, similar to Daly. This hopefully allows Hedlund and the program to cooperate in hiring his successor. It is a more respectful resolution and helps ensure a higher level of continuity.

The alternative of releasing a winning coach has proven too volatile to risk. If an organization's next head coach has to inherit a higher level of success and fails to match or build upon it, criticisms get louder and the eventual rebound takes longer.

North Texas soccer head coach John Hedlund speaks to the press after his 400th victory as head coach against Temple on Sept. 26, 2024. **Photo by Ismael Beltran**

Univeristy failed responsibility of protecting students First Amendment rights despite lifting of drag 'pause'

EDITORIAL continued from page 1

"As a recent decision from the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas confirms, the First Amendment protects drag performances, including in public university venues," FIRE and ACLU stated in its letter to the university.

The university's lack of fighting to keep drag on its campuses, despite state and federal intimidation, resulted in the violation of students' First Amendment rights, including the freedom of expression. The university's inaction also followed a pattern of overcompliance in its decision-making.

This pattern was evident in the university's response to Senate Bill 17, where it swiftly dissolved all Diversity, Equity and Inclusion offices. SB 17 also caused the university to adjust programs to such lengths that they were labeled as being "extreme," instead of challenging or defending their value.

"The situation at UNT is one of the most extreme cases of overcompliance with a censorship law we have ever seen," said Jeremy C. Young, PEN America's Freedom to Learn Program director, in a press release.

The university's pattern of overcompliance in valuing federal and state powers over advocating for its community is prominent in both its conformity to SB 17 and the drag pause. The lack of advocacy from the university is a glaring betrayal of its responsibility to defend faculty and the student body as a higher educational institution.

This incident also raises serious concerns about what other rights the university might compromise to stay in good graces with state and federal powers.

Higher educational institutions carry an inherent responsibility to defend the rights of their community and advocate on their behalf, especially in legal or social cases when they cannot advocate for themselves.

If they fail in this responsibility, then the university fails in fulfilling its mission statement as a higher educational institution to foster a "caring and creative community..."

The university needs to carefully reflect on the choices it made to comply with state and federal authorities and consider the impact those decisions had on the students whose rights and voices were compromised.

Looking toward the future, the university must uphold the rights and protect the identities of its students, ensuring that such freedoms are never oppressed by external pressures again.

Editor's Note: The content of this article was not changed or edited by the following editorial board members due to previous coverage: Editor-in-Chief Gianna Ortner-Findlay, Managing Editor Hannah Everett, News Editor Shehzil Imran and Arts & Life/ The Dose Editor Matthew Winter

Photo Illustration by Ismael Beltran

The negative social and environmental long-term effects of artificial intelligence make it not worth using

By McGlauthon Fleming IV
Staff Writer

The world that many science fiction writers have cultivated for decades concerning artificial intelligence's implementation and subsequent takeover is becoming increasingly realized by the day, and with that comes its impacts on people themselves and their surroundings.

The effect of AI use on the physical environment, as well as its impact on social environments, makes its practical application both unethical and a dangerous precedent for future technology.

The energy required to power an AI data center is immense, as it involves millions of data transfers and interactions to support both the development of AI code and its generative capabilities.

According to CNBC, one AI query uses the same amount of energy as charging a smartphone. Billions of inquiries can take place at the same time at a data center. All occur using either third-party power suppliers or are generating more power out of an already established local municipal power grid, placing stress on it, according to Nuveen, a global investment company.

For example, the cryptocurrency data center in Denton, which will be converted into an AI data center later this year, will require significantly more energy to operate.

Denton, much like the rest of Texas, will begin to experience the effects of having a data center on its grid, including reduced energy efficiency and increased vulnerability to overtaxing, leading to blackouts and exacerbating climate change issues, especially during the summer.

The effects of rising Texas temperatures and summers when Texans need their electricity more than ever are unacceptable.

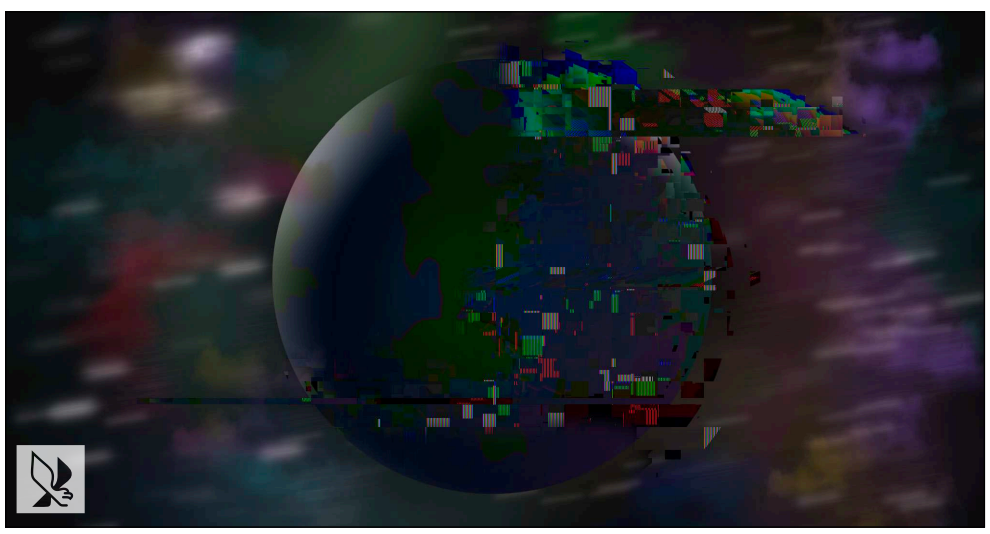

Illustration by Victoria Maldonado

All of that energy usage is not just for AI capabilities but also for the maintenance of the servers and facilities that make AI generation even possible. Such generated electricity is made in a variety of ways, with companies such as Amazon, Microsoft and Google pledging to look into expanding more alternative sources of energy for powering AI, such as nuclear power.

While these promises are great, the problem is in these companies not making significant changes fast enough to lift the burden off an average person.

Until then, the use of natural resources is the most prevalent way to generate electricity, with natural gas being the leading resource in Texas. The use of natural gas produces fewer harmful chemicals and carbon dioxide than other sources, but it is still a significant cause of air pollution, such as smog.

Data centers also require copious amounts of water to maintain their servers. A wholesale or retail data center that is not very large in size takes up 6.57 million gallons of water a year to cool its facilities down and regulate machine temperatures.

The way that the water is used once it arrives at the data centers is not the issue. It is where the facilities are being built and how they are interacting with those communities and environments.

Clean drinking water is in high demand, and most of the world's water is being allocated for other uses, exacerbating the problem since the environment also requires water extracted from the ground.

AI builds upon this, as a fifth of the regions where data centers are built are experiencing water scarcity, such as Abilene, Texas. Which is building a new data center amid standing water restrictions put in place to address its current water scarcity.

If companies seriously invested in better energy generation and water use practices as they have pledged to, AI is a tool that could be used in many ways. AI could be beneficial and promote the general ease of life if correctly implemented.

Nonetheless, the ecological strategies companies have put into place to minimize the carbon footprint and water resource use have yielded low results as the AI industry continues to grow rapidly.

Proper education about AI and changes to maintenance protocols can lead to it being a positive force in technology.

From completely automating more dangerous parts of jobs, such as construction and dangerous maintenance, to allowing more openness in the job market, AI could stand to give many opportunities in society that were thought impossible before.

Unfortunately, it is not currently possible to replace human laborers in these dangerous positions. Changes in the job market only stand to negatively impact those in need of minimum wage and entry-level positions, while saving employers more money.

Unless more legitimate opportunities in the job market open up, using AI to replace jobs in a job market that has seen the highest rise in unemployment since the end of the pandemic is incredibly irresponsible.

Individuals need to stop any heavy reliance on AI and need to demand deceleration on the expansion of AI, specifically data centers, and instead advocate for legislation that requires more conscious and ethical means of maintenance.